1. Description

The Roman empire was a very big place: contemporaries were already talking about world rule as early as the second century BCE. Networks of roads emphasized a closely connected world, and left nobody who used them in any doubt about the centrality of Rome and the power of the Roman state. The majority of Roman subjects whose views we can trace today could identify correctly the current emperor most of the time. But there was nothing inevitable about Roman supremacy, and this sense of unity is only part of the story. In this survey class, we acknowledge the importance of the big events of the Roman state, especially the creation and maintenance of imperial power, and the transformation of the Republic into a dynastic monarchy. We will cover a broad chronological range, from the later third century BCE to the mid-third century CE. But we also emphasize the multiple different cultures and social groups of the Roman empire and their diverse involvement in, and perspectives on, Roman conquest and rule. Case-studies, based on materials ranging from ancient historical and fictional accounts to archaeological studies, will bring to life some of these different perspectives, highlighting the voices and experiences of rulers and subjects alike.

All students with an interest in learning more about Roman society and history are welcome to join the course, and no prior knowledge is assumed.

*Note:* This course, when taken for a letter grade, meets the General Education requirement for Societies of the World or the Core area requirement for Historical Study B. This course fulfills the requirement that one of the eight General Education courses also engages substantially with Study of the Past.

There will be two one-hour lecture sessions per week; you should also anticipate a weekly one-hour section, to be confirmed.

Course-requirements and grading system are indicated at the end of this syllabus.

2. Syllabus

**Week One**

1. Introduction: Roman worlds (9/4)
2. World city and world empire (9/6)
Week Two

3. Towards Roman world conquest: a 3rd- to 2nd-century perspective (9/11)
4. The Greek world and ‘Hellenization’ (9/13)


Section: Polybius of Megalopolis between Greece and Rome:

   Polybius Bk 6, ch. 2-4; 11-58
   Find out about Polybius’ life and work by looking him up in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, online via Hollis

Week Three

5. The world of the Carthaginians (9/18)


Section: Vergil’s Carthaginian Dido

   Vergil (P. Vergilius Maro), *Aeneid* Book 1, lines 12-33; 297-756, and Book 4 (whole)

Week Four

7. The world of Roman Italy (9/25)
8. Roman-style ‘Democracy’ (9/27)


Section: Dual identities in Italy

   Livy Book 1, chapters 9-13 (on the legend of the rape of the Sabine women), and chapters 34-35 (a fictional account of the arrival of Lucumo’s arrival from Etruria, and his naturalization as Lucius Tarquinius Priscus)
   Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Rome’s Cultural Revolution* (2008), chapter 3, ‘Roman Italy: between Roman, Greek and local’

Week Five

9. The horizons of Pompey and Caesar (10/2)
10. The empire of Augustus (10/4)

**Section: Julius Caesar and Gaul**

Julius Caesar, *Gallic War*, Book 6, chapters 11-28


**Week Six**

- 10. NO LECTURE 10/9

- 11. Continuity and disruption from Tiberius to Trajan (10/11)


**Section: Modeling the Roman Emperor**

Suetonius, *Life of Nero*


**Week Seven**

- 12. Midterm exam (10/16)

- 13. Roman imperial interfaces 1: Roman structures of rule (10/18)


No section this week

**Week Eight**

- 14. The emperor in the Roman world (Hadrian to the Severans) (10/23)


**Section: Becoming Roman, staying Greek**


Week Nine

16. Inside Romulus’ asylum: the world of Roman citizens (10/30)
17. The 99% in the Roman world (11/1)


Section: Freedmen represented and in their own words

- Petronius, *Satyricon* chapters 26-78 (Trimalchio’s Dinner)
- Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, pp. 201-205 (numbers 213-224)

Week Ten

18. The Egyptian world and ‘Egyptianization’ (11/6)

Reading: M. Williams, ‘Jews and Jewish communities in the Roman empire’, in J. Huskinson (ed.), *Experiencing Rome*

Section: Perspectives on the siege of Jerusalem, 70 CE

- Tacitus, *Histories*, Book 5, chapters 1-13

Week Eleven

20. The Roman world of early Christianity (11/13)
21. Women’s worlds (11/15)


Section for week 10: The Passions of Perpetua and Felicity

- *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity*

Week Twelve

22. The world of the Roman army (11/20)


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Week Thirteen

23. The ends of the earth I: Britain (11/27)

24. The ends of the earth II: Dura Europus, Arabia, and Babatha’s dossier (11/29)


Section: Rome, India and China

Strabo, Geography Book 15

L. Ying, ‘Ruler of the treasure country: the image of the Roman Empire in Chinese society from the first to the fourth centuries AD’, Latomus 2004 63 (2): 327-339

Week Fourteen


Reading: D.S. Potter, Ancient Rome: a New History, pp. 252-266; D.S. Potter, The Roman Empire at Bay, ch. 6, ‘The failure of the Severan empire’.

3. Books, articles and primary sources

Each week, required background reading is specified under ‘Reading’. Case studies are chosen to focus on primary evidence, textual and material, with some attention also to modern discussions. We are always happy to guide you to more detailed bibliographies, whether in connection with a paper you are writing, or just for interest. Remember that the Oxford Classical Dictionary is your friend: get in the habit of using it early and often! You will find it free and easy to use via the Hollis on-line catalogue.

We would strongly encourage you to buy two books to maintain regular access (although I have also put them on reserve in Lamont Library). They are available at the Harvard Coop:

D.S. Potter, Ancient Rome: a New History (Thames and Hudson, 2009)


You may also like to buy one or more of the ‘recommended’ books to deepen your knowledge and understanding of the ancient Roman world. These are also available at the Harvard Coop:


M. Goodman, The Roman World 44 BC-AD 180 (Routledge, 1997)

D.S. Potter, The Roman Empire at Bay, AD 180-395 (Routledge, 2004)
4. Class requirements

Attendance/participation in sections, including participation in discussions, regular one-page response papers and mini-quizzes: 25%

In class mid-term exam (16 October 2012): 20%

2 Brief papers (1000-1500) each analyzing and discussing one or more primary sources (chosen from an assigned list) that illuminate perspectives on the Roman empire (first due on or before 30 September; second due on or before 9 December): 15% each, 30% in total

Final exam: 25%

5. Collaboration statement

Please read carefully Harvard’s statement on plagiarism in addition to this collaboration statement:

http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page355322

An important part of doing history is discussion: this is of course encouraged in class, and we hope that you continue discussions outside class! It is equally important to acknowledge the thoughts and ideas of others, whether you have received them in a formal setting (e.g. by reading scholarship) or in an informal setting (e.g. in class or in discussions outside of class). All your written work should be your own: you should research and write it independently, although you are welcome to discuss ideas and work in progress with any of the class teachers or with other class members.